

"It is better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one than to have an opportunity and not be prepared."
- Whitney Young, Jr.

Debate Theme

In preparation for this theme, the club could order the Debate Handbook and have one member give a descriptive talk on it. The debate may be held within the club, but is more interesting if you challenge another club. Choose two 4-person teams; one Affirmative and one Negative position. The Affirmative argues for changing from a present situation (for example, be it resolved that we make Toastmasters membership free to all members).

Each team has two lead speakers to state its position and two speakers to counter the other team's position. There should be at least three judges. It is best not to hold a debate type Table Topics as it might touch upon the subject of the debate and influence the outcome.

Effective Listening Theme

Schedule Table Topics at the end of the meeting. Topics leader should prepare questions during the speeches to test the members' listening ability. Ask where, what, when, why, and how questions about the speeches. This will be especially interesting if one of the speeches is on Listening Techniques.

Effective Communication

Effective communication concentrates on having the listener really understand what you mean. It includes such techniques as:

- How to size up your audience and tailor your speech to it,
- How to simplify your message by use of non-technical terms, short graphic illustrations, simple sentences, etc.,
- Holding audience attention by use of humor, dramatics, enthusiasm, emotion, and other presentation techniques of delivery,
- Avoiding listener boredom by using visuals, gestures, eye contact, voice variation, etc.

The speakers should concentrate on fulfilling the specific objective of each speech, so this program will be educational. A good source book for this theme is *Speech Can Change Your Life* by Dorothy Sarniff.

Electronic Media Theme

Simulate TV and radio experience as closely as possible. Use a tape recorder or a video camera to tape the meeting for playback and evaluation. Speakers should use prepared script and follow it closely, reading as an anchor would, without distractions or interruptions.

Other speakers could be meteorologists, sportscasters etc. As an additional touch, someone who has been on radio or TV could give a straight presentation on the techniques to follow for television production.

Evaluation Theme

In preparation for an Evaluation theme, you may wish to order the following from the Toastmasters International Catalog:

Evaluation Kit containing 25 copies each of:

- Panel Discussion
- Speaker's Profile
- Speech Evaluation Forms
- Evaluation of the Evaluator

The Evaluation theme meeting may consist of one speaker and a number of evaluators. Each evaluator may be evaluated; or the group could simply vote on the best evaluator. If possible, the program should be preceded by the Success/Leadership module, "The Art of Effective Evaluation."

Hobby Night

"Show and Tell" night for members' hobbies, avocations, or interesting projects. Whenever possible, the speakers could bring samples or pictures of their hobbies. They can also demonstrate their hobby. Speakers could point out how their hobbies tie in with communications, and they could offer an invitation to participate.



Health Theme

Here are three suggested methods for preparing for a Health theme program:

1. Have members research topics of their choice and give talks on them, perhaps using a panel format.
2. Call community health agencies such as the American Cancer Society, Heart Association, etc., and request speakers.
3. Request speakers who specialize in these agencies from our District Speakers Bureau. The Chair is listed in the *District 6 Directory*.

Humor, How to Find and Use It

The proper use of humor is one of the most valuable speaking techniques; well worth a full theme. You might have the club's most successful humorists discuss their approach to humor. If possible, get a past District Humorous speech winner to give the winning speech and have the club evaluate it. Or, invite another speaker who handles humor well.

Some ways to build the club's humor consciousness:

- Appoint a humorist (joker/jester) each week
- At the beginning of each meeting have a brief joke contest, with the winner getting a traveling award
- Occasionally have a Humor Night, with all humorous speeches (speech contest)
- Try a humor discussion theme, with various forms of humor discussed and evaluated
- Allocate club funds for "Humor Handbook" in the Toastmasters Catalog

Icebreaker Theme

Have long-time members give their icebreaker speeches again during the same meeting. This is a good way for your newer members to get to know the more experienced members. It's also good for long-time members to remember what it was like when they gave their first speech in a Toastmasters meeting.

*"Learning is finding out what you already know."
- Richard Bach*

Interview

Theme Setting. Tape recorder and pad for interviews. Various members of the club appointed as "celebrities," or people who have done something unusual to be interviewed. The interviewers would know beforehand about the people and events in order to prepare appropriate questions.

Program. The "celebrity" knows why the interview is taking place; the claim to fame or special event, but not the exact question, just as in a real interview. The interviewer does not know all the details of the celebrity's story, and must get them in the interview. This theme could fulfill two different advanced manual speeches "When You're the Host" or "The Talk Show" (Communicating on Television) and "Introduce the Speaker" (Specialty Speeches)

Investment Theme

Table Topics can be real or imaginary situations related to "losing your shirt" or gaining fortunes in the market. One or two speeches should be researched studies of the different kinds of investments available. A stock broker would be a good guest speaker.

Literary Theme

Theme Setting. Members review favorite authors and books.

Program. Speakers talk on literary subjects: great authors, best books. Each should come with examples of the works described, and be prepared to defend the choice against others if necessary.

Master the Microphone

Provide instruction on microphone types and techniques. Then encourage all speakers to use the microphone for their speeches and duties.

Officer Day

Ask the club officers to share their roles and responsibilities in speeches and Table Topics. This could be a panel discussion. This meeting would be good to hold one month before officer elections.



Officers' Duties Theme

Many members are unaware of the duties of the club officers. A special meeting is a good method for informing everyone. It is especially good for the new officers, and since the teacher generally learns more than the pupil, assign the new officers the task of delivering a speech on the functions of their office and how they plan to accomplish them.

Topics should be related to encouraging the members to support the officers' programs and to run for office themselves in the next election. Make this as entertaining as possible. Use a skit, a TV interview show, a whodunit, etc.

Parliamentary Procedure Theme

The Success/Leadership module, "Parliamentary Procedure in Action," or Toastmasters International scripts on parliamentary procedure could be presented prior to this theme meeting. A panel of members who are well-versed in parliamentary procedure could enact situations and explain the rules pertaining to what they enacted after presentation. The award could go to that member who catches the most errors the panel makes.

Planning

Several good planning texts and planning seminar materials are available. In fact, the whole educational portion of the meeting can be conducted as a seminar with two or three presentations on such topics as:

- The elements of planning
- The planning process
- Recognizing situations that require planning

Handouts should be given to the members along with a list of suggested reading material. A good follow-up for this session would be a workshop meeting with a demonstration planning session for an Area speech contest.

Planning Workshop

In place of speeches, have a simulated committee session for planning a special event such as an Area or Division Speech Contest. Be sure to list all the things that must happen, what should be done to make them happen, who is responsible, and by what deadline.

Be sure to consider backup or contingency plans for critical things that can fail (spare stop watch, spare lights, alternate invocator, etc.). This may sound basic to some of you, but many Toastmasters who have never planned anything are asked to fill roles that require it.

"Smile at each other...and that will help you to grow up in greater love for each other."
- Mother Teresa

Political Convention Theme ("Republocratic" Convention)

This should provide an exercise in parliamentary procedure. Assign a Convention Chair (Toastmaster), Keynote Speaker, and candidates for the "big" office. All members participate and provide pre-written resolutions. After the keynote address and political speeches, the members start to make and discuss their motions, using good parliamentary procedure.

Research Theme

Learn how to gather material for a speech. This meeting could include such topics as:

- How to get the best service from the public library
- Using a tape recorder for interviews and notes
- Where to find and how to use encyclopedias and reference books
- Using cards and other methods of organizing notes
- Contacting research and reference agencies such as the library, government offices, and other information sources
- Analyzing research information for speech material
- Compiling your speech from notes

Wills and Estates Meeting

Topics can be centered around what the speakers will do when they receive their inheritances. One or two speeches should present pertinent information about wills and estate planning. In particular, they should explain when and how a person should make a will. This would be a good time to invite a lawyer or a banker as a guest speaker.

May 2000



Motivational Themes

Assertiveness Theme

Theme Setting: Practice being assertive and forceful, without being abusive. As a role playing aid, assume assertive nicknames, such as Pugnacious Paul or Strongarm Sue. Keep the tone light enough to avoid giving offense by anything said in the program.

Table Topics: Topics participants should be prepared to cite some activity of the club, community, or state that should be changed, and argue for the change. Another member can challenge the suggestion and argue against it. Both should be deliberately assertive.

Speeches: *Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale or Ayn Rand's philosophy of assertiveness. Other talk could be about self-independence. A good source book is *The Art of Selfishness* by David Seabury.

Effective Persuasion Theme

Persuasion requires more than speaking skill; it requires an understanding of how a specific audience will respond. A good technique is to use an assigned audience approach in which the speaker is told who the listeners are supposed to be and slants the speech to that group. Evaluate the speaker on how that audience would have received the speech.

A second possibility is to present speeches about the art of persuasion; for instance:

- How to size up an audience
- Using emotional appeals
- Judging audience reaction

An excellent source book is *The Magic Power of Emotional Appeal* by Roy Garn.

Great Peoples' Birthdays

Objects that remind people of a great person's life can be passed out in a brown paper bag. Table Topics consists of each participant discussing his or her object in relation to that person's life. At least one speech should pertain to the life of a famous person and how it might prove motivational to the membership.

*“If you want to pull the wool over someone's eyes, be sure to use the right yarn.”
- Anonymous*

Management Techniques

For Table Topics, have Topics participants relate their reactions to different kinds of stimuli or motivation to do things in volunteer organizations such as Toastmasters, PTA, church, Scouts, etc. Ask others to compare job type motivators to volunteer task motivators.

One or two speeches should relate to methods for making people want to do things when there is no remuneration involved. These can be researched from library texts, or they can relate to personal experience. The objective should be to make members recognize approaches they can use to get others to agree to accept volunteer tasks and feel good about doing them. This kind of experience can be beneficial in job situations.

Motivation Theme

Table Topics can be selling an object removed from a paper bagful of things. The bag is then passed on to the next Topics participant. A single technique in selling the product should be used; for example, appeal to vanity, patriotism, or raising guilt feelings. Speeches should expand on one aspect of motivation: loyalty, ego, fulfillment, praise, threat, etc. Award a prize to the one best demonstrating his or her own techniques.

Speech Construction

Experienced speakers explain the mechanics of a good speech with different emphasis on:

- How to give a winning speech in a contest
- A statistical speech: how to organize and present information
- The persuasive speech: getting the audience on your side
- The audiovisual speech: handling flip charts, slides, and overheads
- Specialty speeches; for example, the roast, accolade, after-dinner talks, etc.

*“Teaching is reminding others that they know it just as well as you.”
- Richard Bach*

Roasts

Outgoing President Roast

Theme Suggestion: Try a complimentary “roast”. This is a good time to invite spouses and other guests.

Table Topics: “I’ll always remember...” (incidents of the outgoing president's term). These could be “planted” for the benefit of the guests.

Speeches: Selected members “roast” the outgoing president, in a gentle manner; always ending in a complimentary tone. This can be interesting if the president is popular enough to stand the hazing. This event could be combined with installation of new officers.

Roast the Moving Toastmaster

Topics should be specially prepared questions regarding the speakers impressions of the subject. “Predictions on how the club is apt to fare now that the Toastmaster is leaving”.

At least one of the speeches should be about the person, and can exaggerate fights with the neighbors, brushes with the law, incompetence on the job, and total helplessness until the club took him or her on as a test case. The speech should end on an expression of light hope that the person will continue to improve if he/she is lucky enough to find another club that is willing to put as much effort into their salvation. Present the person with a scroll with friendly comments and best wishes of the individual members. Of course, give the person a chance to respond to the meeting--about 30 seconds should suffice.

Situation Themes

Alibi Ike Theme

Theme Setting: The club is divided into two teams, and each team member has an opposite number (a set number such as 5 or 6). Each participant should prepare a list of “charges”. There are three judges.

Program: A member accuses his or her opposite of the trumped-up charges, and the accused offers alibis. Then the role is reversed. The judges decide which team has the best alibis. The charges should be farcical and not close enough to any real transgressions to cause offense. (Example: “Can you explain how you amassed several million dollars while you were club treasurer?”)

All Speakers Meeting

Forego all but essential business and get right to the speeches because everyone speaks for five minutes (only). Speeches should be manual projects and members who have completed all their manuals should be assigned ice breaker speeches. Depending on the number of speakers, you may want to try some kind of selective process to determine which speeches are orally evaluated.

Club Anniversary Celebration

Celebrate your club's anniversary! You can have an annual event such as a dinner or special meeting with guest speakers from your company or community, plus past members.

Plan special meetings for your five-year increment anniversaries (10 years, 25 years, etc.) Invite District leaders, your Area Governor and Division Governor, plus past members. Have Table Topics center around past members sharing their stories and anecdotes. Invite the local media to cover the event.

Speakers could compare the club of yesterday with the club of today and point out the similarities between today's members and the former members.

Apple for the Teacher Theme

Topics can be a discussion of the traits and personalities of the members' past teachers. Some examples are: my crabbiest teacher, my favorite teacher, etc. Speeches can be complimentary or critical of today's teaching methods and education system. Encourage members to bring teachers as guests. When awards are presented, give each teacher an apple and thank them for their part in making a better community.

Auction Toastmasters Meeting

For Table Topics, have each speaker auction some Toastmaster duty that they are willing to perform for some other member. For example, he/she can sell their service as timer to anyone willing to buy. The seller then serves in place of the buyer the next time the buyer is scheduled. By agreement, the money collected can be donated to the club treasury.

At least one speech should be devoted to the history and development of auction sales. The club bulletin should announce the sale in advance with an old-fashioned auction sale notice. Invite another club for a joint meeting. It becomes even more exciting when cross purchases are made and members have to go to another club to fulfill their commitments.

*"Humor brings insight and tolerance."
- Agnes Repplier*

Backwards Meeting

The entire meeting is conducted backwards with a printed backwards agenda. Closing comments first, awards, timer's reports, evaluations, general evaluation, speakers, Toastmaster's introductions, Table Topics, business meeting, opening. The option for Table Topics is to let the Topics participants give their Topics and then the Topics leader ask the questions.

Bartender Meeting

The Toastmaster acts as a bartender with all of the speakers seated at one table. It is the speakers objective to get the bartender's attention to tell their story, sad or otherwise. A referee may be appointed to keep things in order. Any speaker not heeding the referee is eliminated.

Doomsday

Theme Setting: You have just discovered that the earth has just a few hours before annihilation (collision with another planet, sun disturbance, etc.).

Table Topics: In the few hours remaining, what would you do? Each Topics participant could answer that question, or the Topics leader could set up situations such as handling long-standing feuds, etc.

Speeches: How will the earth end? Each speaker could pick a way (pollution, war, famine, etc.), and describe what we might do to avert or postpone it. Good place for a philosophical talk on enjoying life while we can.

Effective Communication Theme

Have three to five members leave the room while a specially prepared speech is delivered. Then have one member come back in and listen to a summary of the speech by one of the members that stayed in the room. Then another absent member is called in to hear the first absent member try to repeat the summary just heard. The objective, of course, is to try to maintain good transference of the message. There will be a lot of laughs as well as a good lesson in effective (or ineffective) communication.

Embarrassment

Theme Setting: Learn how members deal with awkward or embarrassing situations. Limit incidents to the kind that can be handled verbally (i.e., forgetting a friend's name, spilling a drink at a party, etc.).

Table Topics: My most embarrassing moment was. . . Or assign an “embarrassing” moment to the Topics participant.

Speeches: Describe embarrassing situations and how they were handled; (Casey at the Bat, Mary Queen of Scots, Custer at the Little Big Horn, Napoleon at Waterloo, etc.), Why do we blush? What causes the discomfort of embarrassment? How do cultural mores influence our feelings?

First Meeting of the New Year (Officer Installation)

A special program is planned for installation of new officers. New officers give a speech about their new responsibilities, goals and commitments. Topics participants are asked to make suggestions to the new officers such as: how to increase membership, how to collect dues on time, how to have winning speech contestants, etc. Be sure to invite your Area Governor!

Impromptu Meeting

Your meeting is promoted in advance as a special meeting with special guests and other arrangements. However, when members arrive, they are given a sealed envelope that assigns them one of the normal duties of the meeting, (Topics leader, speakers, evaluators, Toastmaster, etc.). It is helpful to the unprepared speakers to provide several articles that could be developed into speeches.



Lawsuits Theme

To sue or not to sue. This is a good topic for panel discussion. Consider the element of a lawsuit and the advisability of seeking legal help. Consider also the situations that can be taken to Conciliation Court. Invite a lawyer to speak about the profession and to give some guidelines for seeking professional help. Topics can alternate between “for” and “against” witness statements regarding some ridiculous charge against a fellow member.

Media Meeting

For Table Topics, use radio's "Roving Reporter" approach. Hold short question & answer sessions or interviews with the speakers. Pass the mike back and forth just like the street reporters do. To add an element of make believe, have speakers describe the calamity (big fire, sinking ship, etc.) that is taking place before your eyes. If a member has a video camera, try to tape the meeting. Assigned speeches should be on subjects such as:

- How to appear on TV
- How to use a microphone
- How to write a press release

Invite the media. Ask for their comments and suggestions.

One Hundred Years From Now Theme

Speeches and Table Topics are all based on the concept of the future. Although Table Topics is apt to be speculative, the speeches should be projections of theory based on researched facts. Symbols of future life could be placed at each table or displayed near the lectern.

Outdoor Meeting

During the summer months, plan your meeting in the outdoors for a change of environment. Have Table Topics and speeches focus on outdoor environment. Your agenda can be a menu. Have the Toastmaster dress as a server and present the "specials" of the day, which would be the meeting components (speakers, etc.).

Panel Discussion

Theme Setting: Several "experts" discuss a theme and then answer questions from the audience.

Program: The theme can be general; (i.e., communications). One speaker would discuss written, one oral, one visual communications. Questions from the audience can be directed to the expert who has most knowledge in that specific area. Note that the leader of the panel should be a member who can apply the experience to the specific assignment in the Communications and Leadership Manual, but the entire club should participate as a theme.

Parole Board

Theme Setting: Convict comes before “Parole Board” made up of several members. They ask questions; then decide if the convict has rehabilitated on the strength of the answers.

Table Topics: Follow the same theme, but here each Topics participant tells how he/she got “railroaded” into the situation set up by the Table Topics leader. (Example: “The record says you stole a 1,000 pound safe and hauled it away. Is that true? “I did it in a weak moment.”) Some of the Topics could be planted to liven up the meeting.

Speeches: In each presentation, the convicts tell the “board” how it really happened, how they have reformed, or how they'll never get caught again. In each case, the full audience, acting as the “board” votes to free or re-incarcerate them.



Predictions

Theme Setting: Have a crystal ball and other mystical signs of the fortune teller.

Table Topics: Topics participants make a prediction of the club's future, the country, the world, etc. with reasons for the predictions. (“As Vice President of Membership, I predict that we will have ____ number of members by spring because...”).

Speeches: Speakers make predictions (with reasons), or talk about famous psychics like Jeanne Dixon, etc.

Progressive Meeting

Toastmasters and spouses meet at a member's home for appetizers and Table Topics. All travel to the next member's home for the main course and after-dinner speeches. Then all travel to the next home for dessert, evaluations and awards. Be sure that those who made their home available get special recognition during the awards ceremony.

Small Claims Court Meeting

Topics can be “what if” situations that are personally pleaded by the plaintiff and the defendant in conciliation court. The Topics leader can appoint someone to serve as judge and the club can select the winner in each case. At least one speech should describe the kind of situations that are settled in conciliation court, the procedure for filing a suit, and the proper way to present a case in court. This session will be more meaningful if you can get a judge or lawyer to attend and then comment on the meeting and its meaningfulness and its accuracy.

“The world is round, and the place that may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.”

- Ivy Baker Priest

Recognition Meetings

Area Governor Accolade

Invite the Area Governor as a special guest. Hand out Toastmasters International organization charts with the Area Governor's position circled in red. Ask each member to write on the back of the sheet how the club has been helped by the Area Governor. For Table Topics, have each member read his or her accolade to the Governor. Other appropriate comments should be made to let the Governor know you appreciate his/her service.

At least one speech should outline the duties of the Area Governor and encourage members who are eligible to seek the position. Give the Governor a small remembrance and ask him/her to say a few words at the end of the meeting.

Benefactors Theme

Almost everyone has a benefactor who has helped them materially or with encouragement. Perhaps two or three members would like to thank these people publicly. Arrange a meeting where the benefactors can be invited as guests, and the speakers give them the VIP treatment, including complimentary speeches acknowledging their assistance. Tape the speeches and give them to the benefactors. Table Topics can be related to the positive aspects of doing things for others.

Companionship Theme

Everyone should bring a guest for this special meeting. It may be a spouse, a relative, or a good friend. Toastmasters should show their appreciation for their guests friendship by making very special introductions.

Speeches should relate to companionship and can include topics such as “Historical Friendships”, “Friendship is a Two Way Street”, or “The Priceless Values of Friendship”. Table Topics can explore the meaningful values in a friendship.

Family (or Spouse) Night

Theme Suggestion: Plan a special event to honor spouses or other special family members.

Table Topics: Each member introduces and toasts his or her guest. Invited guests could participate if they wish.

Speeches: Plan a talk to explain the Toastmasters organization to guests. Give speeches to honor family members or friends who have been most supportive or helpful.

Honor the New CTM, ATM or DTM

Put up a big sign proclaiming the member's achievement. Table Topics should all relate to the subject in some way. Some should be especially laudatory, and others should be of a mild roasting nature. One of the speeches should point out what is required to achieve CTM, ATM, or DTM. It should encourage other members to strive for the ratings. Another speech (in a humorous vein) should encourage the member to raise their sights and go after bigger goals such as U.S. President or PTA chair. Give the member an opportunity to relate his or her reaction to the meeting.

Local Communication and Leadership Award

Make this a community affair. Select a local non-member who deserves recognition for communication and leadership expertise. The whole meeting should pertain to honoring the individual. In place of Table Topics, call for spontaneous testimonials from the group. This will work best if some Toastmasters are coached to set the stage. Invite the Mayor and other local officials. Take pictures for the local papers. Make it an annual affair.

Program to Honor Fire Fighters

Theme Setting: Invite members of local fire department to attend as guests, or possibly put on a mini-meeting at their facility.

Table Topics: Should fire alarms be made mandatory in all homes? What can the individual homeowners do to reduce fire hazards? If your own home caught fire in the night, how would you go about evacuating your family? After the family, what would be the first thing you would save?

Speeches: Members or firefighters could talk about how to prevent fire in the home, how to plan an evacuation in case of fire, updating your fire insurance, etc. Demonstration of fire alarm types could be possible, also.

“When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together.” - Robert Fulghum

Program to Honor Local Politicians

Theme Setting: Invite a political figure to speak. In most cases some gentle ribbing might be acceptable (depending on circumstances).

Table Topics: Any political topics that is not too controversial. Is parliamentary procedure essential in politics? Should politicians be held responsible for upholding the policies of their voters, even when wrong?

Speeches: The differences between politicians and ambassadors, the responsibilities of politicians in guiding our country, pressure groups and lobbyists (good or bad), and is the two-party system good or bad?

Program to Honor Teachers

Theme Setting: Invite local teachers (particularly any who have worked with Toastmasters). Ask in advance if one of them would like to say a few words. Suggest using Youth Leadership or other ways to relate Toastmasters to youth in school. In addition to a free meal (if meeting is a dinner or lunch), a small basket of apples for the teachers might be appropriate.

Table Topics: Have a “spelling contest”. Should religion be supported by the community school? The role of the teacher in instilling morality. Are today’s schools better? How can we improve schools?

Speeches: What is the role of television in the learning process? Should teachers be unionized? Should we take more interest in teacher’s problems? Describe the changing role of the teacher as community leader.

Program to Honor Police Officers

Theme Setting: Although this is an accolade program, most police officers appreciate some humor if it is not in bad taste. You could use a Sgt. Friday monotone to begin the meeting, a police whistle for the timer, and cardboard “deputy” badges for name tags to add background color. Use discretion to make sure these props are not derogatory or offensive to the police force.

A local police officer could be invited to address the club, and a question and answer session might be in order; with some preassigned questions to keep it moving.

Speeches. Speeches should be on a positive note, and designed to compliment the police. Possible topics: Burglarproofing Your Home, Police ID Numbers for Personal Items, The 55 MPH Speed Limit, and other things police are likely to sponsor.

Public Servants Accolade

Prepare a montage of newspaper clippings of local public servants, display it prominently in the meeting room. invite the public servants as guests and give them VIP treatment. For Table Topics have each speaker discuss the roles of the local public servants and their values to the community.

Several speeches should relate to public service. If any of the members are public servants, they might consider humorous speeches about their associations with the invited guests.



Youth Meeting

Invite all sons and daughters of Toastmasters. The program should be geared to youth problems and activities. Involve the guests in Table Topics which could be scheduled at the end of the meeting. The youth will respond better after they have determined that you are really addressing their problems.

Holidays

Arbor Day Theme

Invite a forester or logger to this one. Give them time to discuss what the duties are and make recommendations for replacing lost trees.

Topics should pertain to trees and/or wooden things. At least one speech should give the origin and meaning of Arbor Day. Along with the traveling trophies, present each winner their own personal seedling or acorn.

Birthday Theme

Table Topics: How my family celebrates birthdays. My most unusual birthday present. Should employers give each person a day off for his/her birthday? Do you believe in zodiac influences? Impromptu reading of each other's "horoscopes" for the day.

Theme Setting: Each member could wear his or her zodiac sign, and be prepared to explain its influence.

Speeches: Background on zodiac and meanings. My most memorable birthday. Famous people's birthdates, and how being born at the time made them famous. What happened on the day or year of my birth.

*"It is only the first step that is difficult."
- Marie de Vincy-Chamrond*

Christmas Theme

Theme Setting: This is a good time to plan a special occasion, with spouses and guests invited. Plan a specialty buffet, with samples of each family's Christmas cooking, or a giant punch bowl, with each person bringing an ingredient.

Table Topics: Scrooge defends his life to Marlowe. My most memorable Christmas. Explain why all the Christmas cards are still in your pocket. How my family celebrates Christmas.

Speeches: How the Christmas tradition began. Christmas in other lands. Is Christmas too commercial? Christmas facts and legends.

Easter Theme

Place small plastic eggs with each members surprise assignment for the meeting at each place. Table Topics could also be placed inside plastic eggs and given to participants. Award a small Easter basket to best Topics participant. Topics can be centered around a "renewal" or rebirth theme.

Ground Hog Day (February 2) Theme

Table Topics: Do you believe in the ability of the Ground Hog to predict the next 6 weeks' weather, and why (or why not)? Are our scientific long-range forecasts much better? Do you have any similar superstitions, and if so, what? How would you guess the Ground Hog story got started?

Theme Setting: Picture or drawing of a Ground Hog.

Speeches: The origin of Ground Hog Day in Punxsutawny, PA. Speeches on different superstitions. Perhaps a speech on real weather forecasting.

Independence Day Theme

Declaration of "Dependence" is passed around to all members. Benefits derived from Toastmasters are the dependency elements. Anyone not wishing to sign should stand up and defend his or her position. Other members may wish to try to convince the independent to change his or her mind.

Speeches can be Declarations of Independence from jobs, home, society, etc.

Memorial Day Theme

Theme Setting: Get an American flag if your club does not already have one. Open with the salute to the flag.

Table Topics: Do disarmament treaties work? Should foreign relationships be controlled or influenced by military people? What will the next war be like? How would you work for world peace? Is the United Nations effective for preventing world conflicts?

Speeches: Should we police the world? (good Topics for a hawk/dove debate). Will world hunger cause war, and what should we do about it? The lessons we learned from the ____ War. What can the United States do to ease world tensions?

New Holiday Theme

For this meeting, have speeches, Table Topics and a guest speaker talk about a holiday many may not be familiar with: Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah, Kwanzaa, etc. Very educational and can be a great way to include new people in your club!

New Years Theme

This one can be fun. Get the Topics leader to dress like the white bearded and bent man of the old year. Topics should be somewhat “crotchety” and indicative of skepticism for the New Year. The members can deride the “Old Year” for his skepticism.

The Toastmaster should be one of the more optimistic members and their goal should be to motivate the club to do bigger and better things in the New Year. This would be a good time for speeches on membership and personal growth.

Thanksgiving Theme

Speeches for the Thanksgiving meeting are reports by people in attendance at the first Thanksgiving Dinner. Another approach would have them giving the after dinner speeches for the first Thanksgiving dinner. Table Topics can be organized around the preparation of the feast. For example, explain to the Chief “what's cooking”.

Also, you could have speakers or Topics participants speak from the turkey's point of view.

Valentine's Theme

This is a good time for a Sweetheart party. Table Topics should include first love affairs, blind dates, broken hearts, etc. (without getting too personal, if sweethearts are there). Topics can be short presentations (and pinning) of corsages or boutonnieres. At least one of the speeches should be on the history and customs of Valentine's Day.